

### The Challenge

The Greater Toronto region is home to approximately 8,500 arts and culture organizations, employing over 150,000 people and generating around \$9B for the region's GDP.<sup>1</sup> While the region is already world-renowned for its many arts and culture activities, momentum now exists to build on the strengths of the sector and increase the profile of arts and culture both among the region's population and globally. To achieve this, increased coordination, collaboration, and cooperation among arts and culture organizations and players in other sectors is required. To do this, a framework to allow sector participants to address the sector's issues and challenges relating to arts and culture in a unified way is needed.

## Current Situation

It is widely recognized that, in Toronto and the surrounding regions, several established organizations are world-renowned for excellence in their respective fields (e.g. TIFF, Pride, Caribana, Shaw Festival, and many others). An opportunity now exists to build on the existing strengths of the sector and establish the Greater Toronto region as a global arts and culture capital. To achieve this, four main challenges have been identified that must be addressed:

- creating a common vision for the sector;
- fostering audience growth and development;
- increasing cooperation among sector participants; and
- developing a robust sector-wide research effort and fact base.

### *The Need for a Common Vision*

An agreed-upon common vision will help ensure that sector leaders continuously show that they are aware of the broader arts and culture ecosystem to which they belong. Any potential vision needs to be sensitive to the goals and aspirations of organizations across all sizes and disciplines. It needs to be general and aspirational in order to inspire sector participants to "think big", while also being practical and meaningful, not just to arts and culture organizations but to the broader Greater Toronto community as well. (See Appendix A for suggestions about what a common vision could reflect).

### *Fostering Audience Growth and Development*

To build a more vibrant arts and culture scene in the Toronto region, audience growth and development is essential. Many festivals and cultural events enjoy stable or growing audiences from year to year. Pride, Caribana, and Luminato each attract over 1.2 million people every year. Attendance for the Toronto International Film Festival exceeded 250,000 in recent years.<sup>2</sup> And anybody who has been to *The Jersey Boys* or *The Sound of Music* knows that there is a well-developed audience base for Broadway-style musicals in the region. Beyond the Greater Toronto region, but still nearby, events such as the Shaw Festival and the Stratford Shakespeare Festival are world-renowned and attract significant audience numbers.

Nonetheless, many organizations' audiences are not growing at the same pace. This is particularly true for paid events (as opposed to free ones, which are a big part of festivals such as Pride, Caribana, and Luminato). For example, Toronto region theatre directors often plan on selling only 35% to 40% of their seating capacity when making budgeting decisions.

CivicAction's consultations suggest that there may be a significant imbalance between the supply of and demand for artistic products and services in the region.<sup>3</sup> To address this, it has been suggested that the sector take better advantage of the region's population diversity in growing interest in arts and culture among local residents. The goals would be to make arts and culture a widely recognized part of the region's identity and instil within the local population a sense of pride and ownership in the sector.

### *Increasing Cooperation Amongst Sector Participants*

To inspire Toronto region residents to engage and take pride in local arts and culture activities and to also gain backing from the public and private sectors, increased collaboration amongst sector participants is required. Currently, the sector often operates in geography- or discipline-specific silos, which can result in the sector presenting a fragmented and uncoordinated image. The time is ripe to bring arts and culture sector leaders together to identify and address the issues and challenges common to most or all them and to speak to these in a unified and common voice.

Increased sector-wide coordination, cooperation, and collaboration can also establish the cohesive platform needed to more effectively influence and educate public and private sector decision makers on the value and importance of arts and culture. While many efforts have been made to address policy issues with a unified voice, a framework to institutionalize this and make cohesive policy positions the norm has not yet been established. If this can be achieved, it will strengthen the profile of the Greater Toronto region's arts and culture sector and further it along the path to becoming a global arts and culture capital.

#### *Developing a Robust Sector-wide Research Effort and Fact Base*

While most arts and culture organizations have a strong fact base related to their own activities, there is currently no effort to capture and track robust sector-wide data. While it is possible to obtain data regarding the size and economic impact of the sector from various sources, there is no mechanism for organizing it in ways that would help the broader sector such as: shaping it into messages that would resonate with the general population as well as policy makers; tracking it over time to identify relevant trends; and analyzing audience characteristics to identify more effective ways to reach out to broader demographics. Developing this sector-wide fact base would take a small, dedicated team (with the necessary funding) either housed within an existing body or as part of a new organization. It would require clear objectives and a way of enabling sector participants to access information.

## Promising New Developments

Three high-profile and relatively recent examples of the arts and culture sector coming together to advocate with one voice are 1) Toronto's Cultural Renaissance, 2) the movement to mitigate the impact on the sector of Ontario's new HST, and 3) ArtsVote Toronto.

**Toronto's Cultural Renaissance** brought together the ROM, the AGO, the Gardiner Museum, the Royal Conservatory, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Canadian Opera Company, and the National Ballet School to advocate as one group for funding for new or enhanced physical spaces. The key reason for their success was the group's ability to clearly define the common problems they were facing and to identify a collective goal and desired outcome. They took their shared message to the governments and successfully secured funding for improvements to their respective physical spaces. Sector leaders involved in this initiative noted that the strong network of the chairs of the organizations involved was key to all seven rallying around a common goal. This confirms the importance of strong and broad networks at the leadership level across organizations and disciplines, providing further support for a leadership forum to help build these networks and allow for greater information (see above).

A more recent example of arts and culture sector collaboration is the **HST Committee**, which consisted of TAPA, the Canadian Dance Assembly, the Canadian Arts Presenting Association, Dance Ontario, CCI Ontario Presenting Network, the Ontario Association of Art Galleries, Opera.ca, Orchestras Canada, the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, and Theatre Ontario. This group studied the effects of the HST on performing and visual arts organizations and engaged in joint advocacy efforts to mitigate the impacts of the tax on the province's arts organizations.

**ArtsVote Toronto** is a group of sector participants from all arts disciplines dedicated to jointly advocating for the common interests of the arts and culture sector through municipal elections and mobilizing artists and arts workers to vote for candidates who are committed to building a vibrant and cultured community. With the municipal election over, ArtsVote Toronto's task now is to encourage support and provide information to the municipal government on the current state and future potential of the arts. It represents a framework that can be built upon to reach some of the objectives identified in this paper.

### **Promising Practices – Other Jurisdictions**

**Culture Montréal** is a non-profit organization with a cross-sectoral approach to promoting culture as a key component of Montréal's identity. The organization's activities target the arts and culture, private and public sectors as well as the city's population. Culture Montréal engages in research, analysis, communication, and educational activities through a secretariat of seven people. It is supported by provincial and municipal governments, private partners and individuals.

The main objectives of the organization includes promoting culture, and making it accessible to all citizens of Montréal and helping to strengthen the profile of the arts and culture in Montréal in order to achieve national and international recognition. It serves as a meeting place for minds of all backgrounds to mobilize people to support arts and culture in the city. It also brings together arts and culture organizations to converge on key issues and raise them with public and private decision making bodies. It operates through committees that develop analysis and points of view to arrive at recommendations specific to particular themes relevant to the arts and culture sector.<sup>4</sup>

**The Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance** engages in marketing, research, advocacy, and policy work on behalf of the arts and culture sector in Greater Philadelphia. The Alliance focuses on community, personal, and policy engagement. The Alliance conducts and publishes extensive research to inform the region's population, lawmakers, and civic leaders on the social and economic impact of the arts and culture sector. It performs its own research and also partners with third parties. The Alliance is very active in policy and advocacy efforts, as informed by the research and analysis performed.<sup>5</sup> The Alliance's work is conducted by a secretariat of 23 people and is supported by a wide range of organizations including charitable foundations, corporate partners, public agencies and individuals.

## Promising Practices – Other Sectors

**Ontario Nonprofit Network's Constellation Model** is used by the Network when bringing together groups from multiple sectors to work toward a joint outcome, where the focus is on action. Public education, service delivery, research and other tangible social change activities are handled by 'constellations': small, self-organizing teams. These teams thread into an overall partnership, which is held together with a framework that shares leadership between the partners.

The three major elements of the constellation model are: 1) lightweight governance; 2) action-focused voluntary work teams; and 3) third-party coordination (residing outside of the core partners of each constellation).<sup>6</sup>

**The Toronto Financial Services Alliance (TFSA)** is a unique public/private initiative of individuals representing and supported by the financial services industry and its trade associations, all levels of government and academic institutions. Its mandate is to enhance and promote the competitiveness of Toronto as a premier North American financial services centre. It is also a central repository for information about all the participants in the financial services industry in Toronto and Canada.

Since its creation in 2001, the organization has worked in partnership with the City of Toronto to produce some important research describing Toronto's financial services industry, the attractiveness of the City as a business location and key issues affecting its competitiveness. The TFSA has three objectives: 1) to develop and implement awareness-building campaigns; 2) to enhance the competitiveness of Toronto's financial sector and to create jobs; and 3) to identify and develop positions on key common policy issues and advocate for their adoption.<sup>7</sup>

**VQA Ontario** represents a single generic brand for Ontario wine that is independent of any member organization's corporate brand and is trusted by consumers. About twenty years ago, a group of wineries came together, recognizing that their competitive position would be stronger if they pooled their marketing resources together rather than pursue individual goals. This included contributing marketing dollars to promote VQA, prioritizing the VQA brand over their individual brands, and being willing to sometimes act as branch offices of a broader organization, which was represented by the VQA brand. This pooling together of interests and resources has allowed the wine industry to go to government with a unified voice.

This effort began with eight Ontario wineries and has grown to include some of the largest wine makers in the region. VQA's impact has been significant. From 1990 to 2010, VQA members' sales increased from \$5M to \$270M and tax revenue from the industry went up from \$2M to \$250M.<sup>8</sup>

## Chief Barriers to Progress

- **Scarce Resources:** Resources in the arts and culture sector are generally very limited and some organizations simply may not be able to commit to sector-wide efforts because their time is invested in running the core business. Resource constraints are a serious barrier to implementing virtually all of the ideas discussed in this paper.
- **Complexity of Creating Broad Alignment:** It will be challenging to align such a large number of organizations around common goals and objectives and enable them to truly speak with a common voice. A structure needs to be developed that ensures that smaller and emerging organizations, in particular, are included in the dialogue and not over-shadowed by their larger, more established peers. The existing arts service organizations can play vital leadership roles in bringing the sector together and aligning the interests of participants across all disciplines.
- **Reluctance to Share Information:** Any coordinating structure must build an environment of openness, trust, and sharing to ensure that participants see sharing of information as beneficial to all without fearing negative consequences.
- **Decline in Arts Education:** Audience growth is inextricably tied to substantive arts education. Given significant cuts to arts and culture related programs in educational curriculums, the sector now needs to fill that void and provide education and outreach efforts to children and youth in the region. This requires significant resources.

## Opportunities for Action

Three broad opportunities for action present themselves to the Greater Toronto region's arts and culture sector as it looks to build profile and audiences:

### 1. Single campaign leading to enduring collaboration

Focus on one or more specific campaign(s) relevant to a central issue facing the sector, and then use the campaign as a springboard to establish a formal framework for cooperation and collaboration on common issues in the future. The sector can dedicate significant resources to address one or more specific challenge(s) within a set timeframe, and then identify other challenges to organize around in the future. Current issues that could serve as potential targets for a broad campaign include:

- audience growth and development;
- policy influence directed at private and public sector decision makers;
- arts and culture education and youth outreach; and
- other issues not specifically discussed in this paper, such as addressing the physical state of arts and culture facilities in the region.

One example of a campaign-focused approach is the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance's 'Engage 2020' Initiative, a \$6.3M research and marketing campaign striving to double arts and culture participation in Greater Philadelphia by the year 2020. The initiative is conducting ground-breaking research on emerging trends in arts and culture participation, providing seed capital to arts and culture organizations for innovative planning and product development, and expanding the local events calendar.<sup>9 10</sup>

## 2. Establish a framework for cooperation

Rather than focusing on a specific campaign, the sector can work toward establishing a sector-wide framework to address issues and challenges as they arise in a common voice, using examples like Toronto's Cultural Renaissance, ArtsVote, Philadelphia 2020, and Culture Montréal as potential starting points. To provide focus, this would require identifying the key issues common to most or all organizations. This would increase the success of advocacy initiatives by the sector – for example, by simplifying the policy asks of government – and also help move away from intra-sector competition.

To succeed, the framework would have to be sensitive to the needs and voices of organizations regardless of size or discipline. It would also be important to engage and include champions of the arts from other sectors, particularly the private sector, to support collective advocacy efforts. Flexibility in any potential framework would also be required to respond to the needs and issues facing the sector, which may change over time.

Potential roles for a new framework include:

- facilitate sharing of information and networking across organizations and the people within them to strengthen bonds, build sector awareness, and encourage identification with the broader arts and culture ecosystem;
- advocate and influence policy with a common voice targeted at municipal, provincial, and federal governments; and
- engage in sector-wide and cross-sectoral initiatives to increase marketing and promotion of the sector and help grow audiences.

## 3. Create a research and policy centre for Arts and Culture

Complementing either of the two potential opportunities above would be to develop a comprehensive and robust research and analysis effort for the Greater Toronto region's arts and culture sector. As discussed above, while data on the contribution and size of the arts sector is widely available, it needs to be continuously updated to identify trends and package information in ways that will resonate with government, other potential supporters, and the broader population, better serving sector-wide goals.

Adding a research and policy element to the collaboration framework described above would ensure that those involved have the benefit of the most up-to-date information on the sector and that this information is used effectively in both policy influence and marketing efforts. Alternatively, an independent research organization could be engaged to offer similar capacity to address sector data analysis and case-making, while offering critical contributions and insights into wider social and economic issues affecting arts and culture, policy analysis and business model development.

## Questions for Discussion

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1. How should the vision for the Toronto region's arts and culture sector be defined? (see Appendix A for initial perspectives)
2. Which of the three opportunities for action should be pursued? Or should a different action be considered?
3. What are the two most important opportunities/issues to catalyze cooperation among sector participants?
  - a. Is the required change incremental or dramatic?
4. The arts and culture sector in Toronto is comprised of a diverse set of individual organizations, associations and stakeholders. They are large and small, non-profit and for-profit, comprised of many different disciplines and are geographically diverse. Give this complexity:
  - a. How can the dramatically different perspectives and models of the region's arts and culture community be unified?
  - b. How should collaboration and cooperation be governed? Is a looser, more grass-roots structure favoured? Or is a more formal, centralized structure needed?
  - c. Can an existing organization coordinate and drive the effort? Or is a new body required?
5. How should any proposed initiative be funded?

## Appendix A - Potential Aspects of Common Vision

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Potential additional aspects that should be included in the collective vision include:

- the need for the sector to come together, unite, and collaborate on common issues;
  - participation and engagement in arts and culture should be inclusive and inviting, and move away from the status and exclusivity often associated with arts and culture events; stress the value of arts/culture to the individual;
  - connecting the need for a thriving arts and culture scene with the creation of an overall civic building effort toward shaping the sort of society and community that Toronto region residents want to live in, reflecting the values of the sector as well as the broader population;
  - importance of developing audiences that reflect the diversity of the Greater Toronto region population in terms of age, ethnicity, and location within the region;
  - creating a strong brand that potential audiences can identify with and relate to;
  - encouraging arts and culture to become a pillar of the region's identity;
  - including participation and support from other sectors in defining and delivering the vision (e.g., private sector, government, non-profits focused on non-arts related issues);
  - big and bold thinking with aspirational goals and creating a sense of urgency for the need to achieve big things;
  - uniting arts organizations of various sizes and across all disciplines around a common vision;
  - bringing attention to the fact that arts education needs to start at a young age; fill the gaps in the current educational curriculum; and
  - encouraging organizations to be more responsive to demands from audiences.
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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. *Labour Force Survey 2006*. Accessed December 2010 from: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/index-eng.cfm>

<sup>2</sup> Based on press articles and publications from cited organizations.

<sup>3</sup> Based on CivicAction's consultations with arts sector leadership over the course of the summer of 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Culture Montréal (2010). *Mission*. Accessed December 2010. <http://www.culturemontreal.ca/en/organization/>.

<sup>5</sup> Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance (2010). *About Us*. Accessed December 2010. <http://www.philaculture.org/about>.

<sup>6</sup> Ontario Nonprofit Network (2010). *Constellations*. Accessed December 2010. <http://ontariononprofitnetwork.ca/page/constellations>.

<sup>7</sup> Toronto Financial Services Alliance (2010). *About TFSA*. Accessed December 2010. <http://www.tfsa.ca/about/index.php>

<sup>8</sup> Based on speech delivered on behalf of VQA Ontario at CivicAction's Arts and Culture Roundtable in November 2010.

<sup>9</sup> The Pew Charitable Trusts (8 May 2008). *Cultural Alliance Announces 'Engage 2020' Initiative to Double Cultural Participation by 2020*. Accessed December 2010. [http://www.pewtrusts.org/news\\_room\\_detail.aspx?id=38728](http://www.pewtrusts.org/news_room_detail.aspx?id=38728).

<sup>10</sup> Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance, *Engage 2020 Initiative*. Accessed December 2010. <http://www.philaculture.org/about/engage2020>.

*This paper was prepared by Mladen Svigir and informed by discussions of CivicAction's Arts and Culture Working Group.*